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AUTHOR Island, D. David
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ABSTRACT

An introductory editorial, concerned with the "credibility gap" between educators of educators and their various constituencies, lists numerous deficiencies on the educational scene today. The bulk of the paper is limited to a discussion of two relevant items: (1) research on the use of paraprofessionals in educator training institutions; and (2) research on applying the notions of behavioral objectives and performance criteria. Five possible uses of paraprofessionals in educator training programs are discussed and examples given. Such roles as field experience supervisors, consultants, intro-school liaison and coordinating personnel community -to-college representatives, etc. were considered. With such a definition of paraprofessional roles necessarily comes a redefinition of educator roles. The concerns and fears of both groups are aired. The paper concludes, hopefully, that the notions of employment contingent upon knowledge about and proof of what one can do would eventually pervade the entire academic community. [Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (TL)

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Paraprofessionals and Behavioral Objectives

D. David Island
University of Washington
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In this paper I will attempt to make two points. Before I begin on that I will introduce my topic with what essentially is a diversion-a negative editorial if you will. It may or may not be related to the body of the paper.

I think one of the most serious problems facing us -- educators of educators -- is our credibility gap with our various constituencies -- students, apprentice educators, public schools, and the general public. What is our reputation with our publics? How do we know? I have observed that education courses/programs/policies in Colleges and departments of Education sadly are some of the last places in which educational innovations/reforms are attempted/developed/experimented with/refined, and just about as often are the last teaching bastian at which what is known about teaching and learning is actually applied widely in the classroom or in the general educational structure. The implicit argument is: Sure all those innovations are fine for public schools or experimental schools, but not for colleges and departments of education.

Well, at least some of the criticism about our lack of beliveability is true. We can answer for ourselves, our own teaching, our own research, our own institutions. How is our teaching based on what is known about learning? How do our education courses reflect life problems in the non-university world? How are the policies/structures/government in your department or college of education related to research in teaching, learning, and organizational behavior? Example/anecdote: Recently the College of Education at the University of Washington a student-faculty committee

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suggested reform in the structure of the program for the Master's Degree. A faculty vote on the new program was taken. But not a student vote. What kinds of changes in educational practice would result if we had, say, a bicameral governing system in our College--where changes in degree programs would have to be approved by both a faculty and a student group? Would it be disastrous? Is there any research information which would help us know? Are there any ways we can conduct research on questions like this to find out?

I contend that the gamut of present educational concerns/dilemmas is all too apparent and depressingly visible at the source: the educator training institutions --- a basic structure of authoritarianism, sanctioned paternalistic practices, widespread use of fear and punishment under the guise of motivation, a basic disdain for reform, a desparate hanging on to long-ago discredited concepts such as credits and grades, an inability to foster/generate/perpetuate improvement of teaching within the institution as a legitimate enterprise, and finally, an almost complete estrangement from the communities which are served by the educator training institution.

The list goes on and one, as I see it. Today at this meeting relevant items on the list are: 1) research on the use of paraprofessionals in educator training institutions, and 2) research on our own application of the notions of behavioral objectives and performance criteria. It is in these two related areas that I perceive our credibility gap to be exceptionally wide.

Point One: University Paraprofessionals. I am speaking about the use of paraprofessionals in departments andcolleges of education. Yes, it is already done to some extent in some institutions and in other

departments. Foreign language departments often use paraprofessionals to a large extent and very successfully.

We can assume that there are a number of teaching and other educational service tasks for which experiences other than formal/traditional academic training are adequate and/or sufficient and/or necessary. Acting on this assumption is vital if we intend to educate educators for <u>all</u> peoples -- especially blacks, American Indians, Chicanos, urban and rural "poor whites," and other disenfranchised or alienated or culturally, racially, environmentally different/isolated peoples. Generally speaking, you and I, --white middle class PhD's -- do not have sufficient experiential and cognitive knowledge to prepare teachers to work with large portions of students and community people. One needn't give up much to admit to that.

An unexpected by-product in thinking about adding paraprofessionals to a University college or department of education faculty is that it can be done quickly -- given a desire and some funding. Years and years of committee approval/structure revision need not have to preceed its inception.

Paraprofessionals on a University faculty can add, among other things, some of the following kinds of resources so badly needed:

1) Serve as supervisors of field experiences in and out of schools for undergraduates and graduates in the communities from which the paraprofessionals are recruited.

Example: At the University of Washington School of Social Work, students are exposed to "nitty-gritties" of urban life under the volunteer direction of a black ex-con whose regular position is that of social service employee in Seattle's Central Area. Among the experiences are: applying for food stamps, living for a few days without I.D; or money

on Seattle's Skid Road, visiting bars, pawn shops and other sites under the tutelage of a man who is acutely aware of what's going on in these "foreign environments."

2) Serve as contact, coordinating and laiason personnel for student-faculty action-education programs in communities surrounding the university -- core city areas, older non-core city neighborhoods, economically exclusive areas, migrant worker camps, small urban areas.

Example: The University of Washington Architecture School has a number of action programs in the State where the professional skills and technological know-how of students is used, tested and refined on real tasks in real communities.

3) Serve as in-house consultants for on-campus seminars, symposia, classes, and courses.

Example: In almost every course I teach relating to counselor education, I hire Neighborhood Youth Corps high school students whose "job" it then is to take my class, serving as youth-consultants links to the University graduate students.

4) Serve as general bridge-building, communications facilitators/ translators. I contend we educators of educators have a severe problem in language and communication. As the amount of our education -- and in some cases experience -- increases there is a proportionate reduction in the range and number of the population with whom we can effectively communicate. A simple inverse relationship. Paraprofessionals may be the one of the few remaining avenues left open to us to become understandable to our publics.

5) Serve as representatives of the/from the community to colleges and departments of education. This may be the most important role of

all. It is likely that such persons would help keep us alert -- demand that we are -- to what is and what is not happening.

The question to be raised now is: can we engage in research on the use of paraprofessionals in the educator training institutions? Perhaps our "do as I say not as I do" credibility gap will be lessened when we conceive research structure/strategies on our own use of paraprofessionals to present as supporting evidence in our enthusiastic encouraging of other levels of education to adopt the notion.

Parenthetically, before I go on to the second point, I'd like to add a postscript here as a summary to my pitch for utilizing paraprofessionals at the University level.

The first -- and hardest -- step in any effort at educational reform (and that's what I'm all about and I presume you are too) is to loosen oneself from the paralyzing posture that all true education --especially the education of educators -- must be packaged/programmed/planned/compulsory/public -- and that it must happen in schools -- and that the education facilitators must all have had the same training - in schools - and must be tatooed with the same credential regardless of what they can do. School as I see it, whether at the university or preschool, is only one aspect of a community educational system.

Point Two: Behavioral Objectives and Performance Criteria.

Legitimate/traditional/understandable arguments and worries have been raised, are being raised, and will be raised by professors about the use of paraprofessionals at the university. The resistance seems natural enough.

For instance, fear about a significant shift in power and control in university faculties; consequently also a shift in policy and ultimately in the nature of the university.

Lingering questions about these topics: are they to be career ladder positions? Will they eventually become professors? If or if not what kinds of criteria for promotion -- scholarly writing?

Sincere concern about the "qualifications" of such personnel. How can they function in a university setting without academic/research backgrounds? Will standards be kept up? Which standards?

Concern about selection and deciding about appropriate hiring criteria. Role problems, especially role definition for the paraprofessional and role redefinition for educators of educators -- professors. Such is a sample of concern.

Potential paraprofessionals have the same concerns from a different perspective and others:

For instance, Tokenism. Many groups may not choose to be represented as paraprofessionals except on a grand scale, at least in proportion to the population.

Security. How lasting is the notion of paraprofessionalism? Is this another eudcation-jargon-dissertation-bandwagon-balloon idea (like modular scheduling) soon to be disproved/discredited/disbanded?

Trust. Do they really mean it -- those university people? Is this just another clever way to force us to "lower our voices" when our communities become too noisy?

Options. What about full-fledged joining of the system -- get the PhD -- or what about full-fledged destruction of the system and start over? Is the paraprofessional route the best one for the goal of mass public education for everyone?

While the truly significant concerns may be those centered in power, control significance, and trust, the role definition/redef-

inition dilemma may be the area in which we can take some immediate action to approach the initial practical concerns of hiring/firing/promotion. I am speaking of behavioral objectives/performance criteria/ and the credibility gap.

I have noticed, with pleasure usually, that many institutional programs, courses, units in colleges and departments of education have been vigorously/thoroughly/successfully/thoughtfully translated into the jargon of behavioral objectives/performance criteria with measurement/ evaluation appropriately following -- so far WITH STUDENTS, FOR STUDENTS.

How about US? Educators of educators? Professors? Perhaps the time has come when our own tasks -- our own personal/professional objectives/goals/missions as educators should receive like translation. ? Into behavioral statements for our performance to be evaluated against?

It seems to me that if we would/could/might do this several extraordinary consequences could emerge.

1) It would be an envigorating - and frustrating - task, illuminating vividly for most of us the incredible array of tasks and missions we attempt.

2) It would enable us to see very clearly which objectives/tasks in which we perform to criteria and those for which we in fact have no ready competency or for which we are overtrained.

3) Thus, it would help us outline new roles for paraprofessionals.

Then, we may be able to quite specifically spell out the areas in which paraprofessionals can - at least initially - be hired. We are also successfully out of that constricting conceptual bag of hiring on the basis of diploma or global paper credential, or, lack of it. We needn't any longer worry about "paper qualifications". We can worry about a far

more important concern: what job is there to be done and who has the competence to do it? Isn't this what we've been saying for years to elementary teachers regarding teacher aides?

Hopefully, the notions of employment contingent upon knowledge about and proof of what one can do will eventually pervade the entire academic community.

And much research could be generated under such a scheme. Essentially, we would be attempting to make our habits into hypotheses. I think it is a habit that we have PhD's as professors of education -- educators of educators. Consistent with research mentality and strategies I suggest that we translate our habits into hypotheses for testing. We may actually find evidence to support our present practice!

We would be performing a service to our multiple constituencies --- reducing the credibility gap in this area --- hiring paraprofessionals to do jobs we won't, shouldn't, or can't do--placing our own programs and personal behavior in currently vogue behavioral terms for public inspection-- and conducting some absolutely essential research on ourselves.